

REMARKS

Claims 1-14 were originally pending in the application while claims 15-19 have been added hereby. As a result of this amendment, claims 1-19 (with claims 1, 2 and 14 being independent claims) are present and at issue in the application. Because the number of claims does not exceed the 20 total claims and 3 independent claims originally paid for with the filing fee, no additional fee is believed to be due for this amendment. However, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee which may be required for consideration of this amendment to Deposit Account No. 13-2855. A copy of this paper is enclosed herewith. Furthermore, added claims 15-19 recite limitations found in original claims 1-14 and, as a result, no new matter has been added hereby.

Applicants respectfully present the preceding amendments to the English language translation of the specification to correct the inadvertent omission of the " μ " symbol in three instances where the specification refers to wavelengths in the near infrared spectrum. The near infrared spectrum is commonly known by those skilled in the art to be at wavelengths near 1.0 μm (not 1.0 m, as in the original specification translation). Therefore no new subject matter has been added.

Furthermore, the paragraph at page 5, line 17 to page 5, line 22 has been deleted to eliminate artifacts associated with the original German application.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 1-14 as indefinite. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested. As suggested by the examiner, the claims have been amended to delete the use of multiple ranges or elements for recited limitations, to delete the use of pronouns where possible, to make the claims consistent as to claiming a single object, to eliminate relative terms, to provide antecedent basis for each of the recited elements, to define a "groove-like structure" as a "grooved structure" and to eliminate the use of reference numbers. Applicants submit that these amendments do not narrow the claims in any manner.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of the claims 1-5, 7-8, and 10-11 as anticipated by Hirabayashi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,900,583), the rejection of claims 1-8 and 10-14 as obvious in view of Hirabayashi et al. and the rejection of claim 9 as obvious over Hirabayashi et al. in view of Kimble (U.S. Patent No. 4,390,564) and Josefsson, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,323,485). Reconsideration and withdrawal of these rejections in light of the amendments to these claims and the remarks provided below is respectfully requested.

As amended, each of the independent claims 1, 2 and 14 (and consequently, each of claims 3-13 and 15-19 depending therefrom) recites a method or apparatus for drying a lacquered wooden object by irradiating the lacquered surface of the wooden object with infrared radiation. By contrast, none of the cited art discloses or suggests directly drying lacquered wood using infrared radiation.

In particular, while Hirabayashi et al. discloses the use of near-infrared radiation to heat or dry a wet coating applied to paper, Hirabayashi et al. does not teach or suggest any manner of drying a lacquered wooden object or, in any manner, suggest that the procedure described therein can be used to directly dry lacquered wooden objects. (In a similar manner, none of the other cited art provides such a disclosure.) As a result, Hirabayashi et al. cannot anticipate any of the pending claims 1-19.

Furthermore, because drying paper products is completely different than drying lacquered wooden objects, Hirabayashi et al. does not, in any manner, suggest that the procedure therein can be used to dry lacquered wooden objects. In particular, the disclosure of Hirabayashi et al. is not concerned with drying wooden objects but is, instead, limited to the drying of paper products. Thus, to the extent that the procedure disclosed in Hirabayashi et al. performs drying, it does not perform drying of any type of wooden object or drying of any type of lacquered product, both of which are recited by each of the pending claims. One skilled in the art would not, therefore, look to Hirabayashi et al. to solve the problem of drying lacquered wooden objects, and, even if such a person did look to Hirabayashi et al., this person would find no disclosure or suggestion within Hirabayashi et al. that it would be possible or desirable to use infrared radiation to dry lacquered wooden objects.

It is clear that the prior art must disclose each of the claimed elements and must additionally provide a suggestion of, or an incentive for, making the claimed combination of elements to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness. See *In re Oetiker*, 24 U.S.P.Q.2d 1443, 1446 (Fed. Cir. 1992); *Ex parte Clapp*, 227 U.S.P.Q. 972, 973 (Bd. Pat. App. 1985); *In re Royka*, 490 F.2d 981 (CCPA 1974) and M.P.E.P. § 2143. Because Hirabayashi et al. does not provide any disclosure, suggestion or motivation for using infrared radiation to dry lacquered wooden objects, as recited by each of the pending claims, it follows that Hirabayashi et al. cannot render any of the pending claims obvious.


Because neither of Kimble nor Josefsson, et al. provides any disclosure or suggestion that it is possible or desirable to use infrared radiation to directly dry lacquered wooden

objects, claim 9 is submitted to be patentable for the same reasons as discussed above for independent claim 1, from which claim 9 ultimately depends.

Still further claim 6 specifically recites a drying time of 5 seconds or less and claim 18 recites a drying time of 3 seconds or less. While Hirabayashi et al. discusses the speed at which paper is to move through a dryer, Hirabayashi et al. does not disclose or suggest any appropriate or possible drying times for drying lacquered wooden objects. More particularly, Hirabayashi et al. does not provide any motivation or suggestion of any appropriate drying times for lacquered wooden objects, much less the particular drying time of 5 seconds or less, as recited by claim 6, or 3 seconds or less, as recited by claim 18. For this further reason, Hirabayashi et al. cannot render either of these claims obvious.

For the foregoing reasons, applicants submit that this application is in condition for allowance and respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections and allowance of the claims. If there is any matter that the examiner would like to discuss, or if the examiner believes that a personal interview would be useful in this matter, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted for,

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